

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105553
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287261
Inspection date	1 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Brendan Curley
Headteacher	Mr Brendan Hennessy
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Heyscroft Road Withington Manchester M20 4UZ
Telephone number	0161 4456079
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in south Manchester in an area that suffers from higher than average unemployment. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic families to almost one in five of all pupils and, on entry to the school, many have difficulty communicating in English. The proportion entitled to free school meals is above average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has been designated as the Catholic school for pupils with physical disabilities; consequently, the number with a statement of special educational need is much higher than that for similar schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The headteacher's pride in the school and its pupils is a striking feature of this outstanding school which provides excellent value for money. The headteacher has been the inspiration and driving force for creating the very special family atmosphere that exists in school today. Visitors are treated to the most cheerful and warmest of welcomes from all staff who always seem to have a smile on their faces. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to this happy school.

The dedication and commitment of all staff has a major impact on all pupils' personal development and well-being, which is outstanding. The very good manners and politeness of pupils are a joy to experience. Excellent relationships exist between teachers and their pupils and pupils' very positive attitude towards their learning ensures all make exceptional progress, often from a low starting point. The school promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures and world religions very well. As a result, all are very tolerant and respectful of others. Links with the community, especially with the local Church and other schools are strong and help to broaden pupils' understanding of their responsibilities within communities. Attendance is in line with that for most schools. Effective action has been taken to reduce unauthorised absence and pupils are punctual.

The quality of care, support and guidance is tremendous. The significant number of pupils who have physical disabilities are fully integrated into all classes and they benefit from the high level of care and support the school provides. The support for pupils learning English as an additional language is excellent.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. The attainment of most children entering the Nursery is generally below average and much lower for some. The good quality of provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that all children make excellent progress by the end of Reception. Pupils continue to achieve extremely well so that, by Year 6, standards are typically above those expected. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress as they are provided with challenging work and the additional support they need from highly skilled teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching and learning is exceptional and this is largely responsible for helping pupils of all abilities to make such excellent progress. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is also of the highest standard, enabling children to make rapid progress. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning, especially for those who find learning difficult or have physical disabilities. The curriculum is outstanding and planning is excellent. It is tailored to meet individual needs. It is enhanced by a wide range of activities for pupils to enjoy outside normal school hours. As a result, pupils of all ages and abilities are successfully motivated and challenged by the interesting tasks that they are given to do.

Freedom of access to the outdoor learning area for children in the Foundation Stage is limited as both classes take turns to use the space. This limits children's opportunities in both classes for learning outdoors. Arrangements for assessment provide a wealth of information on the standards being achieved and this enables pupils' progress to be carefully tracked term by term. Parents and their children know what targets have been set and these are closely monitored and evaluated by pupils and their teachers.

Leadership and management are first-rate. Staff work effectively in teams to tackle identified priorities for improvement. All regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and other aspects of school life. The governors regularly attend training sessions and are committed to

helping the school to monitor its effectiveness. The school has been too modest in its evaluation, judging itself to be good in most areas rather than outstanding. This is because it sets itself very high standards. Overall, the school has an excellent capacity to further improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the learning opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes by developing outdoor areas with ease of access for all children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the school with skills that are generally below those expected, especially in speaking, listening and numeracy. A significant number have more challenging learning needs. Most make exceptional progress because of the high quality of teaching and the close support of the skilled teaching assistants. By the end of their Reception year, most achieve the targets expected of them for this age group. Pupils' rapid progress continues throughout the school, largely due to the very special climate for learning that the whole staff have helped to create and pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour. The current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science, reversing the dip in the school's performance in the 2006 national tests, caused mainly by absences during the tests. Furthermore, a significant number missed their targets by the narrowest of margins. Pupils attain high standards in information and communication technology, and the quality of art and design in Year 6 is outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language make the same progress as others because they benefit from adult support and the willing support offered by their fellow pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely proud of their school and behave exceptionally well in lessons. They have a high level of respect and consideration for others, willingly accept responsibility and are cheerful, polite and helpful. The school council takes pride in its achievements and the 'playground pals' ensure that no one is left out at break times. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their spiritual development has a very high profile, reflected in assemblies and class. The strong inclusive nature of the school successfully develops pupils' self-esteem and confidence because everyone knows that their different achievements are valued and rewarded. A pupil with a disability, for example, recently addressed a conference for teachers to raise their awareness of pupils with disabilities. Pupils understand, very well, how to keep safe and healthy. There are excellent links with the wider community and other schools, and parents appreciate the 'phenomenal' opportunities for sport the school provides to promote a healthy lifestyle. Very good attitudes to work and pupils' great ability to get on well together are very good starting points for future success in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Staff smile a lot and this is very reassuring to pupils, especially those who may lack confidence. All enjoy excellent relationships with pupils and pupils say that, 'teachers are really nice'. The

management of pupils' behaviour is a great strength, ensuring that pupils develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Staff are quick to spot any difficulties pupils may have and help is always readily available. As a result, the pace of learning does not slow. Care is taken to challenge higher attaining pupils and to support the many who have learning difficulties. Information from assessment is used very well by staff to set challenging and interesting new work and to identify any pupils who may need additional help or support. Teaching assistants do a marvellous job of supporting any pupil who is experiencing difficulty for whatever reason.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The very broad and balanced curriculum has a massively good impact on pupils' personal development. There is a particularly strong emphasis on artwork, music, sport and computer skills. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also enjoy learning to speak French. The school is particularly well resourced with computers and these are used effectively by pupils to support their learning in different subjects and also as a teaching aid in classrooms. Frequent visits and visitors further enhance the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is outstanding with activities such as non-contact boxing, wheelchair dancing and a rock and roll band. Pupils experience just about every sport, according to parents, who appreciate the school's efforts for their children. Curricular arrangements are let down by the limited access children in the Nursery and Reception have to outdoor play. The outdoor provision was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection and has been much improved. However, the current arrangements where the Nursery and Reception children take turns to use the area instead of sharing it together means that outdoor learning experiences are restricted.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Being designated as the school for pupils with physical disabilities in the area has resulted in the highest possible standards of care, support and guidance being developed to ensure these pupils' well-being and personal development. All other pupils benefit too. Pupils trust their teachers, feel safe and have a good knowledge of how to keep safe. The full integration of pupils with disabilities in lessons heightens other pupils' awareness of their needs and they add to the level of care and support which the school provides. Genuine friendships are successfully developed, in evidence as pupils play together at break times. All pupils have individual learning targets. Some are initiated by pupils who suggest personal targets to add to the list. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have more specific targets and these are regularly reviewed with parents. Some are unsure about precisely what is expected as their targets are not always in child-friendly language. The school is doing everything possible to improve attendance but medical appointments and the persistent absence of a very small minority limits its success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The long-serving headteacher and deputy headteacher are deeply committed to school improvement and are exceptionally well supported by the senior management team. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, is particularly effective. Stability of staffing is very good and all share the same pride in the

school's considerable strengths. Staff know the school well and their evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is mostly accurate. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been tackled really well but the successful integration of the Nursery and Reception classes is marred by the unsatisfactory arrangements to share the outdoor learning area. The school strives for continued improvement in what it provides for pupils. It is, for example, currently reviewing its procedures for subject leadership and management with staff pooling their expertise to work in teams. All staff regularly and carefully monitor standards and their role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is well established. Governance is a major strength. The business of the governing body is carefully and thoroughly reported. All governors visit the school regularly and carefully monitor the effectiveness of provision.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Manchester, M20 4UZ

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently. It was refreshing to meet such polite and friendly pupils. I really enjoyed talking to you all and looking at your good work. The Year 6 paintings in the style of Van Gogh are brilliant. Below are the other really good things about your school.

- You enjoy being at school and behave so well in class. It was good to see everyone playing so well together at playtime.
- There are so many computers for you to use and I was pleased to see how good you are at using them to revise your mathematics skills and to create picture stories with speech bubbles.
- The school takes outstanding care of you all and is quick to support you if you need help.
- You have very close links with the Church and other schools which give you all valuable learning experiences.
- The staff work so hard to provide you with so many things to do out of normal school time. I wish that I could have seen the non-contact boxing and wheelchair dancing. I thought that the rock band sounded fabulous.

Your headteacher, governors and staff know the school well and have their own programme to make it better, firmly in place. This is why the quality of teaching and learning are excellent and the curriculum is exciting. All of this helps you to make very fast progress. There is one thing missing from their list. Reception and Nursery children have too little opportunity to use the outdoor learning area.

Thank you again, for helping me with this inspection. You are right to be proud of your school because there are lots of very good things happening there. I hope that you will carry on enjoying everything that it offers and try your best to make it even better.